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EMBROIDERIES.

By HESTER M. POOLE.



THE art of embroidery in all ages has been a favorite pastime for women of leisure. The Indian squaw delights to arrange her dyed quills and gaudy beads upon skins and blankets, just as the Egyptian maiden thousands of years ago, with implements of sharpened bone, wove in and out her traceries upon hand-made fabrics. Oriental nations, passionately loving color, and naturally artistic in combining rich, sinuous, harmonizing and contrasting tints and shades, have, from time immemorial, proved themselves adepts in this species of art. In all classes of people, among all nations, Penelope has had numberless followers and rivals.

To trace the development of refinement and the arts of civilization in the embroideries of various nations, without reference to any other indication, would be no difficult matter. Especially would this be the case concerning the evolution of domestic life and the status of women.

The softer sex is naturally artistic. But the degree of culture depends so much upon environment, upon opportunity to study various forms of art, in all its modes of expression, music included, that sensibility to form and color alone is not sufficient to make a woman of leisure successful in the work of embroidery.

The laws of harmony and contrast, of symmetry and proportion, underlie the fashioning of silks and crewels into objects of use and beauty, just as certainly as in making a fine painting or a statue. The latter are higher forms of art, but the same

silks and crewels of a large variety of colors and shades there were produced landscapes of astonishing artistic merit.

The work was in no sense conventional. On backgrounds of tinted satin, silk or sateen, with needles for brushes and silks for pigments, there grew into shape remarkable cloud effects,



EMBROIDERED JAPANESE TABLE COVER. E. T. MASON & CO., NEW YORK.

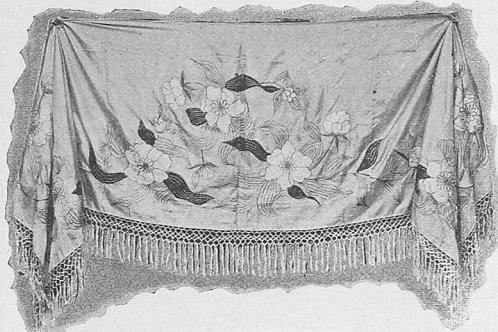
perspectives, trees, the species of which could be readily distinguished, foliage of all kinds, rocks, water, buildings; in fact landscapes glowing or subdued, but real as landscapes ever are on canvas, yet with a depth and richness rarely seen among the works of masters of the brush. Among these illustrations of needle-painting were an apple orchard in bloom and a notable view of Beacon street, Boston, as seen from the window of Mrs. Holmes, with the sky line of the dwellings silhouetted against the clear, cool sunset. All these pictures, spite of the limitations of the instruments used in production, were veritable poems in color.

It is not to be expected or desired that needlework should usurp the work of the painter. But a success so eminent, one that above all attracted artists, shows that the art of embroidery has far from reached its culmination.

In the Columbian Exposition at Chicago the work wrought by the hands of the French, the Spanish, the British, Italian and American needle-women displayed marvels of skill and beauty. In all these exhibits, while the patient toil of our foreign friends was in evidence, the palm for gracefulness, breadth of design, and decorative skill was surely won by our countrywomen.

The increasing use of hangings of all kinds affords a large field for the broiderer. In handsome city houses it is not infrequent that one, two, three, or four hundred dollars or more are paid for one portière.

Plush, velvet, silk-sheeting, satin, sateen, and terry are used for this purpose. Upon them, as backgrounds, are applied work and broideries in gold and silver cord, arrasene, couching, embroidery chenille, outline silk, medieval silk, rope silk, Roman floss, etc. The larger the room, the longer the hanging and the heavier the fabric, the larger and heavier must be



EMBROIDERED JAPANESE SCARF. E. T. MASON & CO., NEW YORK.

great universal principles are at the foundation of all modes of expression. In embroidery this expression is limited, yet as far as it goes it can be made utterly harmonious.

Some years ago, for instance, a daughter-in-law of the late Oliver Wendell Holmes achieved an extraordinary and unique success by a species of original needle-painting. By means of

the silk used in the needlework. It would be a mistake to employ outline silk or filoselle on such stuffs.

Again, the pattern, in such cases, must be large, conventional in design, and extremely decorative, while the colors and



EMBROIDERED SOFA CUSHION.

shadings ought to be as carefully harmonized as in pigments laid on with a brush.

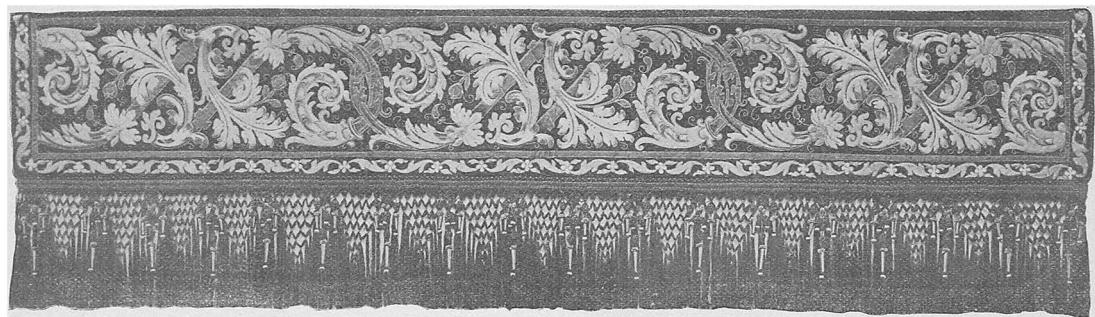
Among such designs, scroll work, arabesques, palm leaves, the poppy, the pomegranate, fleur-de-lis, passion flower, the exaggerated rose, and those curious involved figures so much

brush and Chinese white—in water colors. On a material like felt, baize or flannel, tailor's chalk may be substituted.

For hangings in rooms in common use, serge, unbleached linen, oatmeal and momie cloths, denim and burlaps are in vogue. The two latter are suitable for country and seaside cottages, unpretending chambers, or to separate a back corridor from the front. Pure white and black as fabrics should never be used in embroidered hangings, and seldom in the silk, linen or crewel thread.

Embroidery on a large scale, with the pattern previously stamped or cut out, is done far less than it ought to be for so effective a finish. The material should be thick, and the pattern outlined by fine chenille or gold or silk cord, sewed down with filoselle. It is then finished with heavy buttonholing, and lined with some contrasting color in satin. Thus sage green, citron or russet, may be lined with yellow, showing through the interstices, or any contrasting combination. This would be handsome for a piano scarf, or a dining-room table spread, anywhere that an extremely conventional pattern would be suitable.

In large masses of color the blue-greens and gray-greens will be found to be extremely effective, but they must be used with reference to the tone of the room. Those old faded tapestries that are the delight of a sensitive eye, the soft tintings blended by those twin artists, sunlight and time, are unexcelled by any work of to-day. Just as joy and sorrow shade into each other with the passing years, so do the most resplendent and the most somber dyes, until the charming result is more attractive than any of that glowing splendor caught by the brilliant sunshine of yesterday. Witness the canvases of Titian and Ru-



FRONT OF EMBROIDERED MANTEL DRAPERY. FOR TOP SEE OPPOSITE PAGE.

loved by the Orientals, are always graceful. Wheels and whorls, crescents and broken figures powdered upon the surface with careful carelessness, afford a large variety from which to select. Something in the pattern may suggest the decorations of the room for which it is intended, and the chief coloring ought to contrast or harmonize with that of the other furnishings.

In a dimly lighted room, or one finished in dark and somber coloring, outlinings of gold cord couched on with Asiatic silk reflect shimmers of light and give just the brilliance needed to set off the strong rich hues elsewhere prevailing. In a room finished in light hues the gold would vulgarize the whole.

In a high room cross bands of embroidery are desirable; never in one with a low ceiling. It must be observed that in the foldings of a portière or window curtain cross bands break into lovely sections, and are far more decorative than the folds of materials, embroidered longitudinally.

Again, if one embroidered band only is attached to a hanging, let it be as a dado, not as a frieze, on the principle that decoration should be heaviest near the base of the room.

The tint of the material ought to be unobtrusive. A large mass of bright blue, red or yellow is fit only for savages. The primitive colors in embroidery should only be used in small masses. They are fit only to accentuate and lead the eye to a culminating point of color.

In solid embroidery the fabric should be tightly stitched on a wooden frame. Certainly is this the case when the body is a soft material. The left hand is kept under the work to guide the needle. Designs may be drawn at home with a fine sable

bens, and the faded beauties of that period.

So much is this fact appreciated by some English gentle-women that they have copied large pieces of old Smyrna work, stitch by stitch, in the exact tints of the originals. The multi-



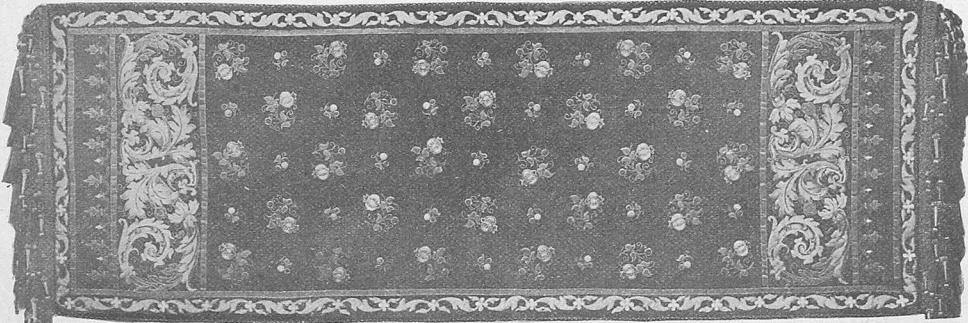
EMBROIDERED SOFA CUSHION.

tude of new dyes that have lately appeared, strangely coincident with inventions and discoveries connected with optics, render this imitation superfluous work.

It is impossible, in one paper, to speak of the various kinds

of needle work. Cross stitch is the easiest of all. It has been the favorite work of children and of the women of crude nations. Yet cross stitch has a certain beauty that is not to be despised. Coarse, brown linen bordered with geometrical designs in red and blue makes serviceable and handsome chamber hangings. It is not trying to the eyesight, is rapidly done, and has lately

ers, scarfs, sofa pillows and bedspreads the Asiatic Roman floss works smoothly and proves to be fadeless. In fact, it will be found that the Asiatic dyes can be relied upon, in all grades of working silk, from the finest to the coarsest. The Asiatic dye in outline and lace silks, and in filofloss, withstands all tests, even that of careless laundering.

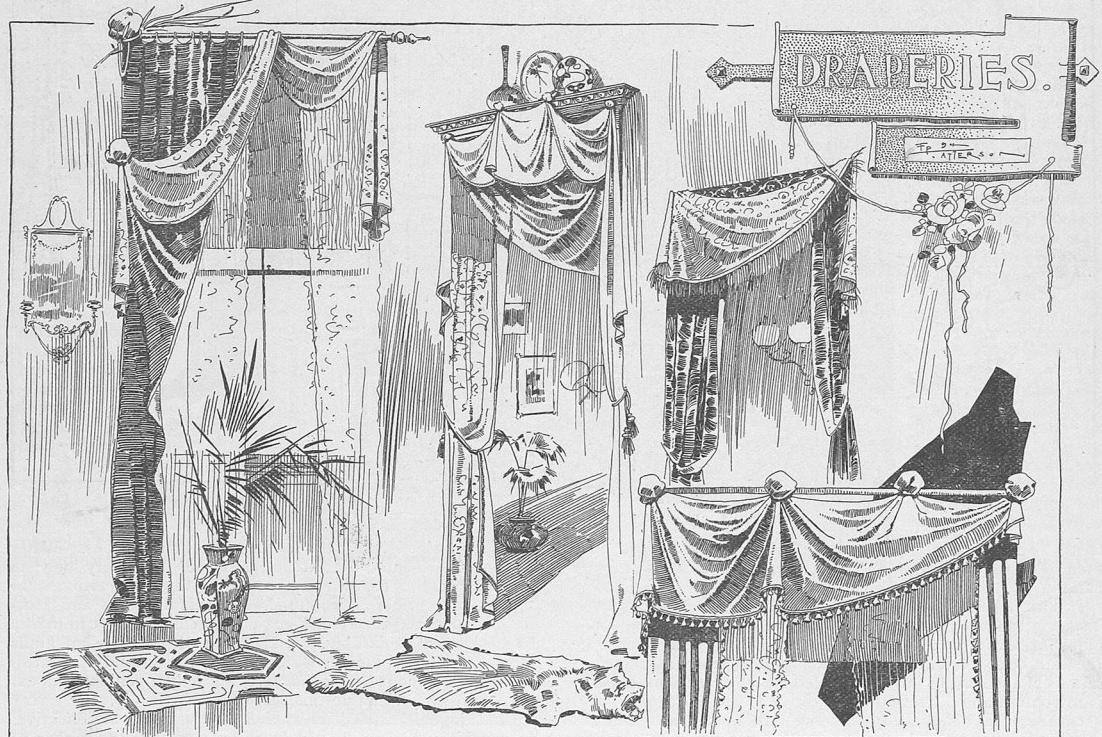


TOP OF EMBROIDERED MANTEL DRAPERY. FOR FRONT SEE OPPOSITE PAGE.

had a revival of favor in this country, under the name of Russian embroidery. In the accessories of the dressing room it is extremely fitting.

From the Russian embroidery it is a long step to those intricate creations in which figure all sorts of fancy stitches and various kinds of silk threads, twists and cords. Some of them

a favorite "pick-up work" of all women is table doilies, large enough for a plate of biscuit or cake, or small enough for finger bowls. Of these pretty additions to the table one can never have too many. Cut from fine linen and hemstitched, marked and wrought at home, doilies are an exhibit of the minute care and skill of the house-frau or her daughter. There is something



DESIGNS IN DRAPERY. BY F. PATTERSON.

are jeweled, such as the borderings of table and piano scarfs; in others the surface is wholly covered with richly mingled stitches.

Many materials, like table damask, show white upon white, unless an occasional five o'clock tea cloth is powdered and edged with some color. In those linens and in fabrics for table cov-

ers, scarf, sofa pillows and bedspreads the Asiatic Roman floss works smoothly and proves to be fadeless. In fact, it will be found that the Asiatic dyes can be relied upon, in all grades of working silk, from the finest to the coarsest. The Asiatic dye in outline and lace silks, and in filofloss, withstands all tests, even that of careless laundering.

in such feminine occupations that marks the domestic gentlewoman, and that cannot be purchased in the most expensive shops. Yet it is a question if that fine drawn work and embroidery that consumes so many hours and so much good eyesight, "pays," in more senses than one.

Yet filofloss can be used without detriment to the eye. It

is composed of thirty or more filaments in one strand. Six of them, loosely twisted, comprise one thread, and one, two, three, or more strands can be used at pleasure. Upon fine linen, silk or batiste the needle-woman can, by the help of tracing paper, draw her own designs of small roses, buttercups, violets and lilies, or better still, of arabesques, conventional figures or the Greek key, and so complete every process of the work herself. It must be confessed, however, that a more satisfactory result is obtained by procuring the stamped articles, unless the needle-worker has infinite patience, delicacy and much practice.

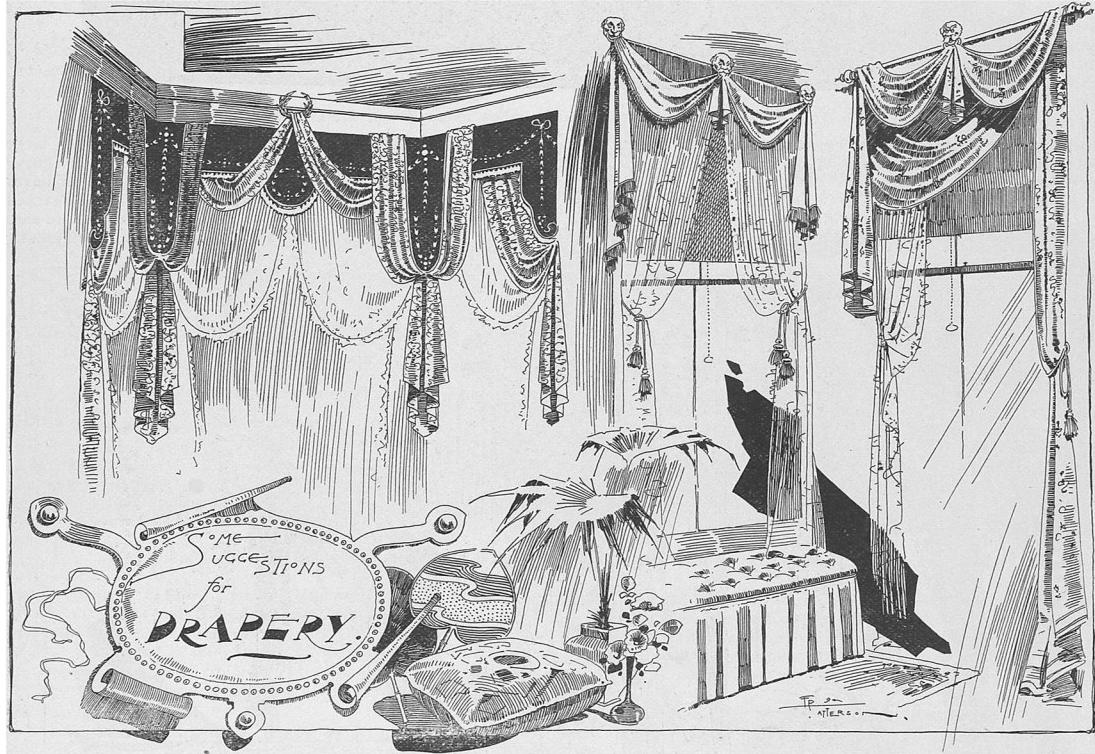
In the smallest articles, such as doilies, toilet mats and sachet bags, trifles to beguile an idle hour, the old-fashioned, solid satin stitch is alone used. The result is satiny and shining, and, particularly when wrought in white upon white, is extremely pretty, on a small scale.

Between these tiny articles and the hangings first considered what a range of material, designs and uses is before the embroiderer! A dozen or more illustrations of skill in every room of a large dwelling may evidence the industry of the house-mis-

the center, while the colors are softly blended by interlacing the threads. Rope silk here shows to better advantage than the Roman floss, which it resembles in make. In articles that are to receive much wear, the twisted embroidery silk, containing more material, is better than any other, though where the broiderer desires to cover the ground swiftly, as in screens, panels and portières, the rope silk is the best.

For ecclesiastical vestments and for large hangings the Medieval silk is used. It has a coarsely twisted thread, and is fitted for linen damask, silk terry, and fabrics having much body. The work is rapid and exceedingly decorative and effective.

The Kensington stem-stitch has an outline silk adapted for that. It is also used in darning. For instance, the border of a table spread may be wrought in large designs, with the stem-stitch in outline. Then, with rope silk, or a finer variety if the fabric is fine, darn the background so that it is entirely covered with subdued coloring harmonious with that of the outline. Some of the handsomest examples of skill and beauty have been needle pictures with shaded darning in the background.



SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR DRAPERY. BY F. PATTERSON.

tress. To choose the right fabric, the harmonious colors, and then to do the work well, shows an unerring eye and a trained hand.

If both belong to an artistic temperament there will never be displayed a gaudy, or even a brilliant screen, hanging, sofa-pillow or scarf in a room filled with much light and color. If the walls be covered with a showy figured paper or mural decorations of any sort, to introduce a mixture of hues in embroidery is to confuse and distress the eye still farther.

On the other hand, the gloom of a dark north room may be lifted by a handsome screen, or a brightly finished table or piano cover. To answer this purpose the design should be large and the treatment bold. Such conventionalized patterns as suggest the pomegranate, the palm leaf, the orchid, or the exaggerated petals of almost any blossom, are most suitable.

If the work is solid the "long and short," or the old feather stitch, is carefully taken, always from the outer edge toward

Under trained hands the darning is not continuous. Water may be represented by stitches in some places very long; in other short, broken or wavy, according to the smoothness or the broken surface represented. On this lily pads and blossoms are outlined and veined, so that the embroidery can hardly be designated as darning. It may, in fact, combine all kinds in one piece, the long and short stitch, the outline, the satin, and others without nomenclature. But only a genius or an experienced worker can do this successfully.

Couching and work with chenille and arrasene are effective. In couching the outline is defined by a heavy cord, either of silk, linen, gold or silver, and then fastened by stitches of a finer silk, the outline, the twisted or the Medieval. These are taken from underneath the fabric and pass over the couching cord at right angles to it. Generally both cord and silk thread are the same color. Its chief use is to finish large, solid figures in needlework. At a little distance it is extremely showy and decorative.